



Australian Bureau of Statistics

2050.0 - Australian Census Analytic Program: Counting the Homeless, 2006

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Homelessness in Australia

On Census night in 2006, the homeless population in Australia was 105,000, according to an academic report released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Counting the Homeless, 2006 (which includes data from the 2006 Census and other sources) found that absolute homelessness, such as sleeping out or in an improvised shelter, accounted for 16% of homelessness in Australia.

Most homeless people were sheltered somewhere on Census night, with 45% staying temporarily with friends or relatives, 21% staying in boarding houses, and 19% staying in supported accommodation (such as hostels for the homeless, night shelters and refuges).

The majority of homeless people were single (57,182 people or 55%), while 20% were couples without accompanying children (20,704 people, or 10,160 couples with 384 accompanying adults) and 26% were in homeless families with children (26,790 people, or 7,483 families).

In 2006, more than two-thirds (67%) of the homeless population were adults over 18 years of age, with 12% under 12 years of age, and 21% from 12 to 18 years old. Less than half (44%) of homeless people were female.

The authors of *Counting the Homeless, 2006*, Chris Chamberlain, Director, Centre for Applied Social Research at RMIT and Associate Professor David MacKenzie from the Institute for Social Research at Swinburne University, state that while the different categories of homelessness are useful in describing people's housing situations on Census night, transience is the typical pattern of homelessness in Australia, meaning many homeless people experience different states of homelessness.

Their research found that the number of homeless youth aged 12 to 18 years decreased from 22,600 in 2001 to 17,891 in 2006, a decrease of 21%. In 2006, there were 26,790 people in families, an increase of 17% on the 2001 figure. There was also a 10% increase in the number of homeless adults outside of families. This was the largest group with about 60,000 people on Census night.

This occasional paper is part of the ABS Australian Census Analytic Program.

Further details are available in *Australian Census Analytic Program: Counting the Homeless* (cat. no. 2050.0), available for download from the ABS website <www.abs.gov.au>.

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